

*The New York Times*  
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## **NEGRO MINISTERS ACT TO FREE THE PYGMY**

**Will Ask the Mayor to Have Him Taken From Monkey Cage.**

### **COMMITTEE VISITS THE ZOO**

**Public Exhibitions of the Dwarf Discontinued, but Will Be Resumed, Mr. Hornaday Says.**

A committee of the Colored Baptist Ministers' Conference will call on the Mayor to-day on behalf of Ota Benga, the African pygmy, who is being exhibited with the monkeys at the Bronx Zoological Park. The ministers will ask the Mayor to save the little African from what they term "the degrading exhibition" of a human being in a cage disporting himself with apes. If the Mayor declines to assist them they propose to hold an indignation meeting.

This decision was arrived at yesterday morning after a conference at the Mount Olivet Baptist Church, on Fifty-third Street. At that conference it was decided to appoint a committee to take action regarding the bushman.

The committee consists of these colored men: J. H. Gordon, Superintendent of the Howard Orphan Asylum in Brooklyn; the Rev. G. H. Simms, Union Baptist Church, Manhattan; the Rev. S. W. Timms, pastor of Holy Trinity Church, Brooklyn; the Rev. Arthur D. Chandler, pastor of the Baptist Temple, Manhattan, and the Rev. W. H. Slater of Shiloh Baptist Church, New Rochelle.

The committee decided that the first thing to do was to see the Rev. Dr. R. S. MacArthur. They called on him at his home at 2 o'clock. He approved of the steps they had decided upon. He advised them, however, to go to the Zoological Park and see for themselves whether the exhibition was going on as described.

The committee went up, but didn't find the little Bushman in the monkey cage. That does not mean, however, that he is no longer to be exhibited in that way. Directory Hornaday explained later that he was going on with the exhibitions just as they have been planned, and as the sign on the monkey cage says, "Each afternoon during September."

His explanation of the boy's absence from the monkey cage yesterday was that, the day being a "pay day" at the Zoo, the crowd was not big enough to make it worth while to exhibit the dwarf. Sunday thousands saw him ambling about in the exposed monkey cage with Dohong, his favorite orang-outang. Ota Banga [sic] did give a private exhibition in front of his room at the end of the primate house. Dohong was with him and sat on his shoulder part of the time.

He was in this when the committee of ministers arrived. They spoke to the little Bushman, but he could not understand them. They were half inclined to think that the case had been overdrawn, when some one called their attention to the sign on the monkey cage. Then they became indignant.

Some one explained that Benga was kept in the monkey house because Mr. Verner, who brought him over here, said he had no other place to put him. To this Supt. Gordon, speaking for the committee, said:

“The trouble seems to be that Dr. Verner did not apply to the proper persons. We have 225 children in the institution to which I belong - some of them pretty large children. We will take this little African and be pleased to have him. We will vouch for it that he will be well taken care of, and we will be responsible for him. If this does not suit, I will take him personally into my home and be responsible for him to the fullest extent.

“We are frank enough to say we do not like this exhibition of one of our race with the monkeys. Our race, we think is depressed enough without exhibiting one of us with the apes. We think we are worthy of being considered human beings, with souls.

“As far as I can see, this little black man is capable of development. Indeed he seems bright to me. We think we can do better for him than make an exhibition of him – an exhibition as it seems to us to corroborate the theory of evolution – the Darwinian theory.”

The committeemen thought at first they would see Director Hornaday, but they finally decided against it, explaining that they would take other steps to obtain Benga’s liberation.

Dr. Verner explained yesterday that he brought the little bushman from Africa about a month ago. He said that when he reached this city he applied to the Salvation Army and the police for a place to lodge the dwarf. The salvation army, he said, had suggested that he should put him with some colored family, but, he said, he considered that a poor course, inasmuch as the little African savage would not have understood them any more than he would white persons.

More than that, he explained, the bushman required the care of persons who had some idea of how a person who was not fully responsible for his acts should be treated.

Dr. Hornaday, he said, had suggested to him that he should allow Benga to stay at the Zoological Park so that he might show visitors how they did things in Africa. Dr. Verner said that he had not been at the park on Sunday. He went on to say:

“If Ota Benga is in a cage, he is only there to look after the animals. If there is a notice on the cage, it is only put there to avoid answering the many questions that are asked about him. He is absolutely free. The only restriction that is put upon him is to prevent him from getting away from the keepers. That is done for his own safety.”

“Benga will stay at the Zoological Garden for the present. Care will be taken not to give exhibitions on Sundays and not to hurt any one’s feelings. There is no financial benefit accruing to me, or to the Park for the boy’s stay there. The public is the only beneficiary.

“In answer to Dr. MacArthur, I desire to say a great part of my work in Africa is of a humanitarian character. I brought the pygmy here to show that he is an intelligent being, and that the zoological and the psychological gap between the pygmies and the apes constitutes a cataclysm. The ‘missing link’ will never be found alive.”

Director Hornaday said that he proposes to continue the exhibitions until the Executive Committee of the Zoological Society orders him to stop. “I would like you to say,” he added, “that I do not wish to offend my colored brothers’ feelings or the feelings of any one, for that matter. I am giving the exhibitions purely as an ethnological exhibit. It is my duty to interest the visitors to the park, and what I have done in exhibiting Benga is in pursuance of this.

“I am a believer in the Darwinian theory,” Mr. Hornaday continued, “but I hope my colored brethren will not take the absurd position that I am giving the exhibit to show the close analogy of the African savage to the apes. Benga is in the primate house because that was the most comfortable place we could find for him.”